

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

SEPTEMBER 2015

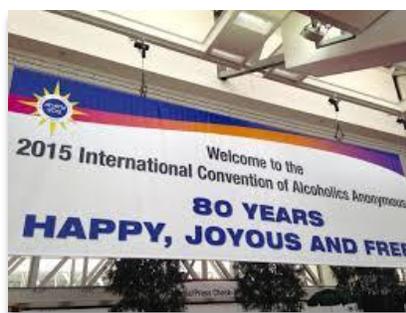
The International Convention:

Living Sober in a Big World

Attending the recent 2015 AA International Convention was a kind of measurement of how far AA has come in 80 years and also how far my own personal recovery has come. I won't celebrate 21 years of continual sobriety until just before this article is published but I have attended three consecutive Internationals which of course are only held every five years. I believe that the healthfulness of my recovery brought me to the International gatherings

and that participation there further enhanced my recovery.

In the final years of my active addiction, my world became



progressively smaller even as my consumption became greater. There was lots of isolation. There was an ever shrinking social and local bar time as solitary drinking at home alone became the norm. Letters, invitations and phone calls went unanswered. Attendance at work or family functions consisted

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April in October—Learning from the Occasional Pity Party

I got sober when I was 27. I am 32 now and still learning how to “survive” a variety of experiences and events as a young woman—who no longer drinks—in a world that does.

This summer, my boyfriend and I attended a 3 day music festival in Camden. It was a laid back vibe and there was no sleeping over, tents, or rain to make it an over the top Woodstock-esque experience. It was great weather—a little hot, but that's to be expected. We were able to pack food and drinks to take into the venue so we sliced up cheeses and veggies, brought dips and chips, and I made gallons of homemade iced tea. The music was great, the people were fun, and we were having a great time. Until we weren't.

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Inside This Issue: What Message Are We Carrying

◆ Best Party on the Planet ◆ Peace, a Poem by Joanne C. ◆ The Here and Now of A.A. ◆ Events and Announcements

Int'l Convention:

The Circle and the Triangle

“The circle stands for the whole world of A.A., and the triangle stands for A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Within our wonderful new world, we have found freedom from our fatal obsession.” A.A. Comes Of Age Page 139

The best way I can think of to describe my experience at the 2015 International Convention that was held in Atlanta, Georgia this July is through the circle and the triangle. After all, it was at the 20th Anniversary International Convention in St. Louis in 1955 that the circle and triangle were adopted as an AA mark. This was my third International Convention and I have loved every one I attended.

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April

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On Friday, the event started at 5:30 and was just a full evening of music. It was fine and I woke up Saturday excited to pack the cooler and settle in for a long day of sun and music. We left the house at 10:30 and were sitting in the sun before noon. All day we had a great time on the waterfront, though the evening portion of the concert has you change venues and go to a larger venue with a larger crowd. I was already tired and a little cranky. (I can admit this now, though at the time I insisted "I'm fine.")

It was a little before 8:00 and I was already checking out. All day I was ignoring the clouds of smoke that puffed up around us and was perfectly content with my iced tea. But I had a bit of headache from being in the sun all day, and my boyfriend decided it was time for him to go get a beer. He's allowed to drink. And he didn't drink all day. He wanted one beer. But the thing is, I wanted to relax too. And I know very clearly where a drink will take me and that isn't at all appealing. But the idea of choosing to ingest something that would help take the edge off is not a choice I have anymore. I get to sit there and get irritated at the drunk kids next to us, the long day, the bugs, the sky, the songs...whatever. I had moved from having a fun time to full-on pity party.

Of course the boyfriend had no idea why I was in a funk, and thankfully, I didn't go there. It never will end well if I've got an opinion on him having a drink just because I can't. He is always very respectful around me. Fortunately I didn't tell him about my pity party, but I was done, and we had a long set ahead of us. At one point I think I was lying in a fetal position on the ground just wishing it would end and we could get home to a shower and bed!

So I had the pity party—why me? Why can't I relax like most people? Why is this fair that so young in my life I have to give up something that everyone my age does in a normal way? But this is a slippery slope. These thoughts don't take me anywhere positive and there is no answer. The only truth I have is that this is the hand I was dealt and I have two

Peace

*Alcoholics feel deeply
too deeply to express
Their need for understanding
and their true happiness
They need to join with others
But fear to get too close
For in these gentle moments,
They feel the very most
They grow in age and wisdom
As passion seems to fade
In reality of lost dreams
And plans that they had made
But their need to tell another
Of their soul's need for release
Helps them share it
with their brother
And it's there they find their peace.*

Joanne C.

choices—accept that and choose to live a life of freedom and happiness, just without a beer at a music festival. Or deny that and live a life of torture with no choice about drinking because my choices have been taken away—and likely all my freedoms would be (hospitals, institutions, or jails people!). So I choose to accept it—and learn from my mistakes.

On Sunday, I let my boyfriend know that I wasn't up for staying as late that night. And even though it meant missing some of the show, he was fine with that. And I never got to that TOTALLY DONE place I had been the night before.

So I learned—we just have to do a little more planning, a little more honest check-ins with ourselves, and accept our reality a little more often than others do. And for the freedom and amazing life I have now, that's quite alright with me.

April E.

What Message Are We Carrying?

This past Sunday I had the great pleasure of speaking at Maryville with my mother. The women were very welcoming and my mom and I were blessed with the opportunity and ability to carry a message of hope. And as our AA history has taught us, this is precisely how we stay sober.



We did, however, receive unfortunate news while we were there. The director told us that they have been holding meetings themselves because AA never shows up. I've also been hearing about H&I commitment "no shows" at Intergroup meetings.

I recall being told in early sobriety to never say no to commitments. My belief is that showing up to what we commit to is far more important than not saying no. Acceptable alternatives to saying no are "do you have another date available?" or "I will help you find someone". Also when we find ourselves unable to attend a commitment we take, it's our responsibility to find someone to cover or at least notify the appropriate person so they can get it covered.

Making a commitment and not keeping it is so much worse than turning it down. Once I fully accepted the hopeless implications of the 1st step, I desperately needed something I could depend on. Fortunately I got the message that AA would be there for me until I found my higher power. Today I am grateful that I didn't give 20 women the message that AA doesn't show up.

Some tips for showing up:

1. Remember that we represent AA – the only hope for so many alcoholics (who are helping us stay sober).
2. Know that we will be available to complete the obligation before we accept it.
3. Arrange to go with a supportive friend if we are fearful.
4. Make sure we have contact information in case we need more information or we are unable to attend for a valid reason (if our ass falls off we just need to find a wheel barrow).
5. Be clear on the location and what needs to be done.
6. Allow extra time to find the facility and get settled.

Thank you for carrying a message of hope.

Karen M.

The Here and Now of A.A.

As I make progress on my life of sobriety, I find myself increasingly in a position to help others who are still sick and suffering.

My spiritual journey is propelled by living in good continuous action; for it is by "passing it on" that I am able to maintain my own sobriety. It is, paradoxically, only by selflessly thinking of others that I free myself of my own negative "self" directed behaviors.

As such, my life is more useful - it has a deeper meaning and stronger purpose. My new attitudes are fostered, which allow me to be more positive; more accepting, humble, grateful, and tolerant. I am willing and obedient and responsible.

God is surely working through me in profound ways, directing me and my life. As I meditate and pray, He loans me the strength, courage and wisdom to experience a true freedom from the bondage of self. Instead, I have a new found inner resource, a new self I can tap into and it is the wellspring of serenity. For me, the great miracle of A.A. is a quality of faith and a life beyond my human understanding or comprehension.

Nothing I could have ever planned or envisioned would have possibly led me to where I am today; each day is one day at a time, in the moment of here and now.

*Paul N.
Moorestown*

Triangle and Circle

(from page 1)

The Circle: First, let me note that I am not a fan of huge crowds. When a 56,000 plus person representation of the “whole world of AA” joins together in one place for the International Convention, it can be a bit overwhelming. However, it is also truly something beautiful to behold. When I consider the magnitude of the world of AA witnessed at convention, I reflect back on the GSO Archives area which had a display case showing Big Books in a multitude of languages (Did you know that the Big Book is currently translated into 69 languages, most recently into Twi for Ghana?); I revisit in my mind the Opening Big Meeting where the 94 countries with representatives attending convention carried in their countries’ flag (I could write a whole piece on that alone); and I consider the diversity I witnessed while meandering through the International Hospitality Suite which included a quilt pieced together by women in recovery in Brazil (each square symbolic of how before coming into AA the women were alone but with recovery they come together through unity as a whole, like the quilt, to represent a thing of beauty).

The Triangle:

Service Early in my journey of recovery, I was taught the value of service not only for my own recovery but to help others as well. As a result, each International Convention I have attended included serving a shift as a volunteer. The closing meeting indicated that for Atlanta 4,000 people signed up to volunteer in advance of convention and by the end of convention, an additional 2,000 people had signed up on site and served. My role this year was to distribute the pre-ordered convention souvenir books to attendees in the registration area. This role allowed me to see some New Jersey folks who were passing through the



line to pick up their books as well as practice patience and tolerance at times. I look forward to Detroit in 2020 when I will have the chance to volunteer again

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and offer someone a smile or kind word while at the same time helping the host committee.

Unity: When I hear “unity” I think of the traditions. Maybe that’s because on page 574 of the Big Book it states “The Twelve Traditions ensure the *unity* of the Fellowship,” or maybe it’s because I have had sponsorship that has taught me the importance of the traditions as an integral part of AA. Whatever the case, I knew that I wanted part of my International Convention experience to involve learning more about the Traditions. This year, in advance of convention, I downloaded the app which allowed me to explore the meeting/workshop options and add them to my personalized schedule in the app. I chose several to put on the schedule so, if another adventure came up during that time slot or the room had hit capacity when I arrived, I had a Plan B or Plan C.

The workshop (*technically they are called “meetings” in the convention Program of Events, but my past convention experience has told me to view them as workshops because there is usually a panel of people presenting and they are focused on their experience with a specific topic*) I attended was “AA and the Internet: Adhering to Traditions.” In good alcoholic fashion, I went in with the preconceived notion that this would be about the anonymity related traditions. Wrong! The session started with a suggestion to use our smartphones to search AA plus your city and state and then proposed that if after the advertisements the first three hits weren’t related to meetings in our area that we have a “communication problem.” The workshop focused on how websites can be critical to unity in AA. Traditions 10-12 weren’t addressed much at all and the focus was quite eye opening for me. When it was over, I have been provided with a lot to think about

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AA International: Best Party on the Planet

When asked to write a few words about the recent International Convention in Atlanta, I seem to have in mind that old saying that the recovering alcoholic who lives in gratitude will not drink. Was Atlanta as good as Toronto, which I attended in 2005, maybe not. Was Atlanta crowded? Absolutely. Did I seem to spend more time waiting in lines than actually attending events? Probably. Were there things to complain about? Sure. Will I attend the next International Convention in Detroit in 2020? Detroit? Absolutely!

With gratitude to the Fellowship and my Higher Power, I did greatly enjoy Atlanta. I ran into half a dozen or so friends I knew, each time, with big smiles on our faces, we embraced each other with the gratitude of knowing that we were there to celebrate life. I also met many, many new friends in Atlanta. Everywhere we went, more friends. It was the epitome of the saying, in AA there are only friends, and friends one hasn't met yet. On the first day of the convention, I met a guy from Orlando who asked if I had a phone charger he could borrow for his 4S. I loaned him my multi-adapter cord and juice box which he used to charge his phone while we road on the shuttle bus from our hotel to the convention site. I now have a friend in Orlando the next time I'm in the area.

If I think about the defects of this convention, they definitely existed. It was extremely crowded. The only real place to eat was the CNN food court across the street from the convention center. It was extremely crowded, but I met new friends with whom we shared the table. At times it was nearly impossible to find ice cream, but we made due. The person with whom I traveled pushed me to new levels of patience, tolerance and love. But is that such a bad thing? Our hotel, which I booked in November, was a 30-60 minute bus ride from the convention site. But everyone at the hotel (which we dominated) was very friendly and the shuttle buses were very well organized, clean and new. Not so bad.

The good things about the convention were numerous. Where else can you do "the wave" at an AA meeting? For the old timer's meeting, there were over 100 AAs with more than 50 years of sobriety, each. Unfortunately, the dozen old timers who spoke were only give five minutes a piece. But there were 12 speakers with more than 50 years sobriety! More than one had met Bill W. At the opening ceremony,

the parade of nations, wherein each country in attendance has a representative carrying its nation's flag, did seem to go on and on. But when was the last time



Opening meeting in the Georgia Dome.

you attended a meeting at which close to one hundred different countries was represented? Likely only at the International Convention.

While wandering the convention site, the periodic and spontaneous cheers from the crowd of attendees was a reminder of one thing. It is good to be alive and sober. The theme for the Atlanta convention was "happy, joyous and free". While everything was not perfect, I have come to appreciate that nothing is. I am grateful to have attended Atlanta, to have partaken in the celebration of life and to know that but for the grace of god and the Fellowship of AA, I would have none of this. God willing, I will see you in Detroit in 2020.

JerseyBrett

Sober Living

(from page 1)

of brief stops, quick hellos and speedy departures.

Vacation trips were spent mostly in resort hotels' lobby bars. Ski trips often didn't get past the ski lodge bar. Golf was mostly 19th hole stuff. A thermos of cocktails brought oblivion and solitude to the beach. Scotch became a breakfast food.

My world was shrinking. I was headed towards becoming a hermit. A lonely drunken hermit!

After the gift of desperation brought me to AA, I was embraced by a loving fellowship that coaxed me out to diners after meetings and to sober social activities with my new AA friends. I celebrated my first sober holidays, birthday, dances, etc. in decades with my new found friends.

A small circle of AA fellows and their homes and families, familiar meeting rooms and the 'usual' booths or tables at local restaurants and diners gave me a sense of belonging that I had been lacking for years. I was at home in AA. I had a new family. I thought it couldn't get any better. But I was wrong!

After they were sure I was on the AA beam, my new friends took me to a higher level: Road trips to out-of-network meetings, then the Area Convention and then out of town and out of state conferences and affairs. Sober trips to the City for ballgames or theater; sober ski trips or weekends at the shore or in the mountains came next.

Then my first overseas trip in recovery with AA companions where I meet AA friends I didn't know yet waiting for me in European towns I had once drank in. AA meetings at winter breaks on tropical islands where I had formerly been

inebriated or within a short distance of the Great Wall of China or near the palaces of the Czars followed. Then came *Friends of Bill W. & Dr. Bob* meetings on cruise ships. I found that my program of recovery and its principles are as portable as my disease and character defects had been.

After the gift of desperation brought me to AA, I was embraced by a loving fellowship that coaxed me out to diners after meetings and to sober social activities.

My first International Convention was 2005 in Toronto where I came to truly appreciate the worldwide scope of the disease of alcoholism and, more importantly, the universal nature of the

program of recovery I had been introduced to so close to home. My sense of belonging mushroomed. I found that I had friends from other countries and continents that I hadn't even met yet. And I came to believe that cultural differences like nationality, religion and languages do not have to stop me from shared brotherhood with any other people.

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Triangle and Circle

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(of course, I took notes so I could reflect back on it as well).

Recovery: The twelve steps of the program make up recovery and practicing them is what provides me with the principles that were so important for surviving in a sea of people, some even more lost than I, at International Convention. Hearing the speakers who spoke at the Big Meetings offered me with the shared experiences of their journey that I find vital to my own recovery. The diversity of the speakers - deaf, convict, gay, etc. - brings me back to the circle which represents the whole world of AA.

Although the circle and triangle were phased out of use by the General Service Office by 1994, the International Convention experience I had was one of the unity, service and recovery within the whole of AA that they have come to symbolize.

(Feel free to learn more about the circle and the triangle at <http://silkworth.net/pdfGSC/Around-AA-Dec-1993.pdf>)

Robin M.
Hainesport Serenity

Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

Convention Brings Out the Best in All of Us

I have a confession to make: my Atlanta Convention piece last month was intentionally provocative. There, I've said it; my Ninth Step in writing. I was hoping that others would write and contribute "correctives" to my sardonic coverage. This month, I'm happy to say, we have those "correctives."



Robin M., Gino B., and Jersey Brett, have answered the call. You can find their wonderfully prosaic Convention essays in this issue. We owe them our thanks for reminding us the true meaning of the International Convention and its prominent place in our world-wide fellowship. They've also given all of those who were not able to be in Atlanta, a good picture and feel for what the experience was like.

Robin's *The Circle and the Triangle*, Gino's *Living Sober in a Big World*, and Brett's *Best Party on the Planet*, represent some of the finest and best writing talent we have here in South Jersey. It's an honor for me to have these talented people along with me on my journey in recovery. It's *their* picture of the Atlanta Convention that we should take away with us.

Your Editor.

San Antonio and Atlanta came next. Both were wonderful experiences in my journey of recovery. I hope, God willing, to be in Detroit in 2020. Then Vancouver in 2025. My world is so much larger now than the tiny world my drinking led me to which was mostly a closed room, curtains drawn, phone and doorbell ignored. Just me, my bottle and my loneliness.

AA has made me a citizen of a big, beautifully diverse, God-given world. AA International has taught me how large the fellowship is and how far it reaches. And it reminds me how far the fellowship has brought me. And for that I am grateful.

Gino B
Hainesport Steps to Recovery

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

September 2015

Emotional Sobriety

The Monday night "Language of the Heart" meeting in Mullica Hill is now focusing on the Grapevine publication called "Emotional Sobriety". In this collection of Grapevine stories, sober women and men describe the transformations sobriety can bring as they practice the principles of AA in all aspects of their lives.

Beginner Meeting

New Washington Township beginner meeting. How Important Is It Group. Thursday's 7:30 PM. St Charles Borromeo School. Johnson & Stagecoach Rds. Open. Joe 856 589 5710.

Big Book Meeting

New Open Big Book Meeting. Saturdays at 7PM at the Center for Family Services, 108 Summerdale Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043 (upstairs).

Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, September 12 – "Grapefest" hosted by the Area 45 Grapevine Committee. Record your own story with writers & audio workshops. Skit presented by the Grapevine Comm. Victor E & the Slogans players. 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM. St. Charles Borromeo R.C. Church, 176 Stagecoach Rd., Sicklerville (Washington Twp.) NJ. 08081

Tuesday, September 22 – Medford Women's Spiritual Growth Group celebrates their 33rd Group Anniversary with Food and Fellowship. Food at 6:30 pm and Speaker at 7:00 PM. Medford Friends Meeting House, 14 Union Street, Medford, NJ (1 block west of Main Street in Medford).

Sunday, September 27 – Triboro Riverton Group celebrates their 42nd Anniversary. Sacred Heart Church, 405 Linden Ave. (4th and Linden), Riverton, NJ 08077. Food and Fellowship @ 7:00 PM. Speaker @ 8:00 PM. For further information, please refer to South Jersey Intergroup website: www.aasj.org. NEW

Saturday, October 17 – 2015 Day of Sharing. 8:30 – Noon. Members of all the Intergroups of Area 45 (South Jersey, Central New Jersey, and Cape-Atlantic) come together to share their experience, strength and hope. Come out and help make AA in New Jersey stronger than ever! Absecon Presbyterian Church, 208 New Jersey Avenue, Absecon, NJ 08201. Continental breakfast will be served.

November 5-8 – 5th Annual Jersey Shore Roundup will be held at the Ocean Place Resort and Spa in Long Branch, NJ. All the rooms have ocean views. Great lineup of speakers. The weekend includes the Conference, Friday night ice cream social, Saturday night buffet dinner, Sunday morning buffet breakfast, Saturday night dance with DJ Frank and entertainment with Hilary R. from Dallas TX. www.jerseyshoreroundup.com Register online. NEW

Saturday, November 21 – Gratitude Dinner sponsored by South Jersey Intergroup. \$30.00 p/p Nicolosi's Catering, 1 Hessian Ave, Woodbury, NJ. 7:00 – 11:00 PM. Tickets on sale at IG Office, IG Meeting (3rd Wednesday at St Bart's), Edward S: 856-524-816

Nov. 20th, 21st, & 22nd - Cape May 9th annual Waves Roundup at the Grand Hotel hosted by Cape Atlantic Intergroup more info: www.caigrp.org.